

## **Alban City School SEND Information Report: February 2023**

### **1. How does the school know if children/young people need extra help and what should I do if I think my child may have special educational needs?**

One of our teachers' and teaching assistant's first jobs is to get to know your child. They are usually the first ones to spot if your child might need extra help at school.

If they have any concerns, they'll start by adapting their teaching to try and ensure your child is learning. They might ask the SENCO, Assistant SENCO or other teachers for support or ideas. Often, some simple changes can make a difference.

If this is not enough, teachers complete a Cause for Concern form outlining what the difficulties are and what they have already tried. This goes to the SENCO who will consider the best course of action for your child. We will also talk to you to get your views and we may ask your child how they feel things are going.

It may be that you feel your child has special educational needs that are not apparent at school. This happens more than you may realise as children can be very good at masking their difficulties outside of their homes. Please talk to your child's class teacher in the first instance if you have any concerns. You may then want to speak to one of the SEND Team.

### **2. How will school staff support my child?**

The type of support will always depend on the needs of your child. We gather information about your child to work out what the barriers to learning and participation are. Your input and your child's input are invaluable. From here, we look at what adaptations, adjustments or interventions are needed to remove or reduce those barriers.

If your child needs provision that is different to or additional to their peers then they have special educational needs and will be added to the school's SEND Register so school leaders can keep a close eye on them. This is nothing to worry about and their names are not reported outside of the school. We are only required to provide the number of children who receive SEND Support to the Department for Education.

Your child's teacher will prepare a SEND Support Plan based on the barriers to learning and participation that they have identified. This plan will outline what needs to be in place to remove or reduce the barriers.

The bulk of the plan will be focussed on making the whole-class teaching inclusive of your child's needs. There may also be some reasonable adjustments that are only for your child such as sensory breaks or a wobble cushion.

The plan may also include interventions which are short additional teaching sessions that teach very specific knowledge or skills which cannot be taught through whole-class teaching or where a suitable approach is not suitable for whole-class teaching.

### **3. How will I know how my child is doing?**

Every morning we begin with a Soft Start. You can come into the classroom and can stay with your child to do an activity with them. It is a chance for you to catch up informally with teachers. We find that this is often the best route for you to gain regular up-to-date knowledge of your child and share information with the staff.

There are 2 parents' evenings every academic year plus a final report in July for all pupils.

If your child has a SEND Support Plan, these are reviewed termly and you will be invited to contribute to this. If your child has an EHCP then these are formally reviewed annually but there will be more regular formal and informal discussions throughout the year as needed – at least termly.

You are also welcome to make an appointment to see the SENCO or Assistant SENCO at any time.

#### **4. How will the learning and development provision be matched to my child's needs?**

Teachers, in conjunction with the SEND Team, identify the barriers to learning your child is experiencing and work out what they need so that they can access the lessons, achieve the learning objectives and participate in school life. Your child may also need reasonable adjustments and interventions depending on their individual needs.

We recognise that one size does not fit all. Some children thrive on doing something different to their peers whilst others hate the idea of appearing different. Most children, even those who are pre or non-verbal are able to indicate their preferences. The children are best placed to guide us towards the correct approach.

At the planning stage, we consider the individual child and what will work best for them. Sometimes we don't get it right the first time so we try something else until we find what does work.

Often we have to be quite creative or inventive in removing barriers to learning, but that's OK and we always celebrate when we get it right!

#### **5. What support will there be for my child's overall wellbeing?**

Wellbeing is at the heart of what we do at Alban City School. If children aren't happy, they won't learn.

Getting it right for them in the classroom and socially on the playground is the first step in supporting their wellbeing. Making sure your child is included and valued goes a long way towards good mental health.

However, your child may need a little bit more. Again, our approach is tailored to each child and their needs and wants.

Some children need informal opportunities to talk to a trusted member of staff whilst some children need regular sessions with a mentor. A few children may even need counselling. All of these are available although sometimes there can be a waiting list.

If your child gets a diagnosis, for example of autism, they might find it beneficial to talk to the SEND team to help them understand their diagnosis and what it means for them. They might even like to do a presentation to their class with the SENCO. We have found this really helps their peers to understand and learn how they can be a good friend to your child.

The School Nursing Service are also an invaluable source of support for a range of wellbeing

issues including emotional regulation, sleep problems, continence and healthy eating.

Sometimes the whole family need support. We are able to access Family Support Workers and a specialist SEN Family Support Worker on your behalf. They can help you with all sorts of difficulties, provide you with parenting support and also be a listening ear.

Most children at some point need a trip to see Lani, our school dog, who is brilliant at putting smiles back on the children's faces.

For more information on the different levels of wellbeing support available, please see the Mental Health Support page in the Wellbeing section of our website or ask to speak to the SEND Team.

## **6. What specialist services and expertise are available at or accessed by the school?**

Sometimes, we might ask external professionals such as an Educational Psychologist or a Specialist Teacher for advice. We may also, with your agreement, refer your child to another service such as speech and language therapists or occupational therapy.

Some parents prefer to pay privately for assessments or therapy and we are happy to work with these professionals for the benefit of your child.

The SEND Team will advise you on what might be helpful for your child.

## **7. What training have the staff, supporting children and young people with SEND, had or are having?**

The SENCO, Miss Claire Lord is a qualified teacher with a degree in Applied Psychology. She also holds the National SENCO Award which is an additional qualification that is required for the post. Miss Lord has taught across the Key Stages from Reception to Year 6.

The Assistant SENCO, Mrs Davina Lawton, is a qualified teacher who also has a degree in Psychology. Mrs Lawton specialised in Early Years and KS1 whilst she was a teacher.

Both Miss Lord and Mrs Lawton attend a range of training each year relevant to the needs of the school and supplement this with their own reading and research.

We regularly review the training needs of all our staff to ensure they have the knowledge and skills to support your child.

Each year we provide training on:

- Safeguarding
- Anaphylaxis
- Behaviour support (Hertfordshire Therapeutic Thinking)
- Trauma and Attachment Informed Practice
- Inclusive Teaching

We also use other strategies such as mentoring/coaching, modelling, professional discussions and problem solving meetings to provide more bespoke training and support to our staff.

## **8. How will you help me to support my child's learning?**

Each term, your child's teacher will provide you with information about what your child will be learning. You can talk to your child's teacher to find out more specifically how to support them with particular topics.

You may also wish to talk to the SEND Team about ideas that will help your child. Depending on your child's needs, we might suggest academic strategies or we might feel that some of the social skills such as turn-taking would be beneficial at home. You might want to know a bit more about something specific such as phonics. Come and talk to us and we will work together to help you support your child.

If your child is using a technology-based intervention, we can show you how to use this at home if this is something you wish to do.

Sometimes, systems we use in school such as visual timetables are also useful at home. We can make these for you and support you to put them in place. This can then help your child make a smoother transition from home to school in the mornings.

We are also able to access Family Support Workers on your behalf, including one that supports families where a child has special educational needs. Please talk to us if you feel you need this support.

### **9. How will I be involved in discussions about and planning for my child's education?**

We know that every family is different and has different circumstances that affect how they are able to work with school. This is why we aim to be flexible in our approach.

Usually, when there are concerns, the first stage is a chat with the class teacher. You may then want to have a discussion with the SEND Team. We will want to know all about your child from your perspective so that we can take a holistic approach to support.

If it is agreed that your child does have a special educational need then we will work together to create a SEND Support Plan. We will also invite you to work with your child to produce an 'All About Me' sheet which will sit alongside their plan.

As time goes on, some parents prefer an ongoing conversation and we find our daily soft start enables this. You can also make an appointment to talk to the SEND Team at any time but we would recommend any problems or worries are discussed with the class teacher in the first instance.

If your child has a SEND Support Plan, we invite you to contribute to this each term. Some parents like to have a face to face meeting in school whereas others prefer a video call or a phone call. We also appreciate that you may not know what support your child needs in school and prefer to leave it to us to guide you. Again, this is fine.

If your child has an Education, Health and Care Plan (EHCP) these will be formally reviewed annually from the date of the initial plan but there will be ongoing discussions and reviews throughout the year.

### **10. How will my child be included in activities outside the classroom including school trips?**

We recognise the importance of education beyond the classroom and will carefully consider how any activities or trips outside the classroom can benefit the learning of all the children. Depending on the needs of your child, they may require some additional planning and support to ensure they are safe and able to get the most out of the experience.

For example, we have enabled children to attend the whole-school annual pantomime trip through measures such as ear defenders, seating arrangements, named 1:1 adult, their parent accompanying them and visuals to show what will be happening.

There are some rare occasions where, in conjunction with parents, it is agreed that a particular trip would not be in the best interests of a particular child because the nature of the trip is likely to cause them distress and that cannot be sufficiently mitigated by any adaptations.

Any decision where a child does not participate in an activity would be made with yourselves having considered all the relevant information to determine what would be in your child's best interests.

### **11. How accessible is the school environment?**

The school is on two levels with children generally using stairs to gain access to the first floor. There is a lift that pupils can use with an adult if necessary. There are ramps to gain access to the front and side entrances of the school and also out onto the playground.

The playground is part concrete and part soft-surfaced. The soft-surfaced section has a range of wooden playground equipment. Depending on the needs of a particular pupil, this equipment may unfortunately not be accessible to all.

The playground is also smaller than average and can feel busy and noisy. We mitigate this by having staggered playtimes to reduce numbers outside, however, we appreciate that for a very small number of children this may not be an appropriate play environment for their needs.

We also have a theatre in the basement which is only accessible by stairs.

### **12. Who can I contact for further information?**

SENCO: Claire Lord [clord@albancityschool.herts.sch.uk](mailto:clord@albancityschool.herts.sch.uk)

Assistant SENCO: Davina Lawton [dlawton@albancityschool.herts.sch.uk](mailto:dlawton@albancityschool.herts.sch.uk)

Please call the main office on 01727 860304 and ask to speak to us.

### **13. How will the school prepare and support my child to join the school, transfer to a new school or the next stage of education and life?**

#### Joining the School

If your child is joining us and they have or you suspect they have special educational needs, then please make an appointment to talk to the SEND team as early as possible. We will want to know all about your child so that we can work out a plan to support their transition to our school. This might include visits to their current setting, additional visits to our school, photo books or videos. This is not an exhaustive list as we will work with you to identify what support is needed for your child.

#### Leaving Us

When children move on, we aim to get them off to the best start in their new setting by providing information and guidance to the new school. The SEND Team will have a conversation with the receiving school's SENCO and will hand over the current SEND Support Plan as this gives a good summary of what is in place for your child. We will also liaise with you and the new school to facilitate any additional transition support such as extra visits. All children in Year 6 also receive substantial support for transition whilst at Alban City School.

Once your child has started at the new setting, we will send over all the files we hold (please note we only do this once it has been confirmed that your child has started at the new school).

We also love to have visits from our past pupils to hear how they are getting on!

#### **14. How are the school's resources allocated and matched to children's special educational needs?**

All schools have a portion of their budget notionally allocated to support children with special educational needs. This is partly used to fund teaching assistants so that interventions can be carried out and is also used to fund additional equipment or resources that might be needed. Finally, we may need to pay for training for staff members.

There is not a set amount per child and the amount spent will depend on the particular needs of a child.

The best and therefore first strategy will always be to ensure the whole-class teaching meets the needs of pupils which is also the most cost effective method! Your child may then need additional resources such as a wobble cushion which we will pay for out of the budget. If your child needs additional intervention, this may be with an external provider or with a Teacher or Teaching Assistant. Again, the costs for this come from the SEND budget.

If your child has an EHCP, they may need more support than we would normally be expected to fund from our budget. We may then receive additional funding for your child in order to put the provision outlined in their EHCP in place.

Sometimes a child's needs may escalate quickly. This can often be at a time of change e.g. when moving from Reception to Year 1. We may need some additional funding if for example, your child needs a period of 1:1 support. We can then apply for Local Higher Needs Funding for your child. We would always discuss this with you first.

#### **15. How is the decision made about how much support my child will receive?**

The first thing we do is look at what are the barriers to learning for your child. By this we mean what are the things that are preventing them from learning or participating in the same way as their peers. We then consider how we can remove or minimise those barriers through whole-class teaching strategies, reasonable adjustment and intervention, the aim being, to ensure they have the same opportunity to access the curriculum and that their attainment is in line with their ability.

For example, a child with dyslexia who has difficulty copying from the board, has difficulties with working memory and is slightly behind in their phonic knowledge will need written items in front of them. They may need written words supplemented with visuals. They may need a Learning Story to support their working memory when learning a particular skill. They will need model texts with words that they can decode. All of these things should be considered when the teacher is planning their lessons.

If this child also struggles to remain seated and focused, they may need a wobble cushion and regular movement breaks. These are reasonable adjustments that are individual to your child.

The child is also likely to need some additional teaching to help them catch up with their peers in phonics. This would be an intervention and may be 1:1 or in a small group.

We are careful not to overload a child so we would need to agree priorities if there are a number of areas to work on. We aim to minimise the amount of time children are removed from lessons for interventions and will only do this when necessary.

We are also mindful that too much support can create children who become dependent on adults which can lead to underachievement and negatively impact self-esteem.

## **16. How can I find information about the local authority's Local Offer of services and provision for children and young people with special educational needs and disability?**

Please go onto the Local Authorities website: <https://www.hertfordshire.gov.uk/microsites/local-offer/the-hertfordshire-local-offer.aspx>

Here, you will find a range of information from organisations to support parents to EHCPs.

If you have any difficulties in accessing this yourself and would like to access this in school with support from one of our staff, please let us know.

You can also talk to the SEND Team.

## **Glossary of Terms**

**APDR:** Assess, Plan, Do, Review. This is also known as the Graduated Response. If your child is on the SEND Register, each term, teachers assess your child's current needs, write a SEND Support Plan, carry out the plan and then review it at the end. You will be involved in this cycle.

**EHCP:** Education, Health and Care Plan. Some children have needs that require significantly more support than we generally able to provide. These children may benefit from an EHCP. Please discuss this with the SEND Team if you wish to apply for an EHCP.

**SEND:** Special Educational Needs and Disability. The Children & Families Act 2014 defines Special Educational Needs and Disability (SEND) in the following way:

1. A child or young person has SEND if they have a learning difficulty or disability which calls for special educational provision to be made for him or her
2. A child or a young person of compulsory school age has a learning difficulty or disability if he or she:
  - Has a significantly greater difficulty in learning than the majority of others of the same age, or
  - Has a disability which prevents or hinders him or her from making use of facilities of a kind generally provided for others of the same age in mainstream schools or mainstream post-16 institutions

**Reasonable Adjustment:** A measure that can be put in place for your child or a group of children that is not normally available to all. For example, movement or sensory breaks.

**Intervention:** Additional teaching or support for your child that is over and above what is provided to the whole class. E.g. a maths catch-up intervention.

**Special Educational Needs & Disabilities Register:** A list of children who require different or additional provision to that typically needed by their peers.

When deciding whether a pupil should be placed on the SEND register we will have regard to the following:

- Pupils will have difficulties in one or more of the following areas:
  - Communication and Interaction (not solely due to English being an additional language)
  - Cognition and Learning (not solely due to English being an additional language)
  - Social, Emotional and Mental Health
  - Physical and Sensory Needs
- Pupils' difficulties in one or more of the above areas is negatively impacting on their academic and social development
- Parental evidence suggests that pupils are masking difficulties at school
- High quality teaching and typical differentiation is not proving sufficient to enable the pupil to make expected progress based on their prior attainment.
- The pupil requires provision that is different to or additional to that of their peers in order to make expected progress based on their prior attainment.
- The pupil's social, emotional and mental health needs are barriers to effective learning.
- Pupils may need additional support due to long-term or frequent absence due to their disability.